



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR

Stephen D. Isler

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Jason W. Papanikolas (Mayor Pro Tem)

Amanda M. Dewey

Jeffrey Jay Osmond

Ethan D. Sweep

Worksession Minutes January 6, 2020 | 7:00 pm

Present were Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jason Papanikolas, presiding, Councilmembers (CMs) Amanda Dewey, Ethan Sweep, and Jeffrey Jay Osmond. Mayor Stephen Isler had an excused absence. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Maria Broadbent, Clerk Kerstin Harper and citizens.

1. Announcements

Mayor Isler was absent because he fell ill. Pepco will hold an energy assistance day at its Forestville service center on January 16. CM Dewey will attend the Maryland Climate Leadership Academy in Annapolis tomorrow hosted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

2. Discussion Items

FY 2021 budget: TM Broadbent said she provided an updated budget calendar, which moves the 2nd worksession in February to the 24th of the month and schedules the all-day budget workshop for Saturday, March 28. Tonight, the Council is requested to provide initial guidance to staff on FY 2021 budget goals.

TM Broadbent said CM Dewey has requested an explanation of what constitutes the (general) fund balance and how it is used. The Town has been in the habit of not spending all the money it raises in taxes and other revenues. The unspent money becomes the fund balance, which has been carried over as savings into the next year's budget as opposed to the tax rate being adjusted. Her inclination is to keep the tax rate at the current level when she creates a budget. However, she would like the Council to give her feedback on this and then create a budget that does not use fund balance if possible. Although it is a common practice, the downside of using fund balance is that it will eventually deplete the rainy-day fund. This reserve is needed to fund operations in the first quarter of each fiscal year and any unforeseen fiscal emergency.

CM Dewey said she requested this information to clarify the issue for residents because there is much confusion about it. She would like to get a sense of how much spending would be covered using only current revenues and make that a starting point for the budget. MPT Papanikolas said the Auditor's Report shows the FY 2020 budget being \$300,000 in the red prior to transfers from reserves being made. TM Broadbent noted that a substantial amount of the Town's revenues, such as Highway User Revenues (HUR), are restricted and may only be used for designated purposes. The Town has saved a lot of money for road improvements but has not used it. She thinks it is better to spend money to keep up the roads on an ongoing basis rather than save for a big project.

CM Osmond sought clarification on the rainy-day fund. TM Broadbent said the Town has always had a reserve to cover operating expenses for the first 3 months of a fiscal year when no tax revenues are received. However, she believes there should be enough in savings to cover 7 months of operations, or

approximately \$1,500,000, for a rainy-day fund. CM Osmond said he would like to understand how the FY 2020 budget has performed, including the reserves, and if possible, reduce the budget next year. TM Broadbent said the Town will not know how this budget has performed until the year is out. It may make more sense to level-fund the next budget and see what the experience is.

TM Broadbent summed up that she plans to take stock of the directors' enhancement requests, which will be modest this year, and then fund operations based on the same tax rate as last year. If Councilmembers have any enhancements, they are requested to submit a form as soon as possible. Town organizations will submit requests of their own. CM Dewey said the survey results will also be useful for informing budget decisions.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, commented, during Mayor Calvo's tenure, the Town wanted to do street repairs but first had to pay off a previous infrastructure bond and then compensate for the loss of HUR and real property tax revenues during the great recession. That is why money was set aside in a dedicated infrastructure reserve fund. While the financial situation is good now, HUR may be reduced again and reserves may be needed. MPT Papanikolas replied that the current HUR deal is in effect until 2024, and the Maryland Municipal League (MML) is working with Maryland municipalities to make it permanent.

2020 Census: CM Dewey reported that Berwyn Heights' April 1 Census Day is now listed on a Prince George's County map, showing where residents can get help with completing the census. The Town will also receive a big census sign from the County and census jobs are still open. MPT Papanikolas said that Maryland loses millions of dollars in federal funding because of an undercount largely of minority populations, with Prince George's County being one of the hardest hit. TM Broadbent said Berwyn Heights itself had a good response rate of upward of 80% in previous censuses. Therefore, it did not qualify for grants available through MML to help with the count.

CM Dewey said the count will begin in March when residents should receive notices to complete the Census, which can be done online, by phone, or on paper. This will be followed up with census takers going door to door.

CM Sweep asked whether Councilmembers have picked any winners for the holiday decorating contest. He thought there were a lot of good decorations this year. CM Dewey said that Mayor Isler was supposed to have received nominations from residents.

3. Minutes

CM Dewey moved and CM Sweep seconded to approve the November 18 worksession minutes. The motion passed 4 to 0. CM Sweep moved and CM Dewey seconded to approve the December 2 worksession minutes. The motion passed 4 to 0. The December 11 Town meeting minutes were distributed.

4. Department Reports

MPT Papanikolas noted that this is the year when everyone should write out all four digits of the year when dating checks or other important documents to prevent easy falsification. CM Sweep asked if there is an update on lose leaf collection. TM Broadbent said Public Works will resume collection when they get the leaf machine back from the repair shop, hopefully within the next week. Public Works will extend the collection period through January to pick up any remaining leaf piles.

Phil Ventura commented that a lot of trash was left at the curb over the holidays, in part because staff was given additional time off and were not able to finish pickups. He particularly noted a pile of fluorescent bulbs that has been sitting out at the Goucher and Marietta Drive intersection for a while. CM Sweep and

Dewey said that Christmas and New Years' Eve are regular, not extra days off for Town staff per Employee Handbook. But falling in the middle of the week, they leave less time for refuse collection. TM Broadbent said fluorescent bulbs are hazardous waste and cannot be picked up by the Town's Public Works Department. This matter is handled by Code Department which will notify the owner of the violation and how to dispose of the bulbs.

CM Osmond asked about the status of hiring a 2nd Code officer. TM Broadbent replied that an applicant has been selected and a background check is now being performed. CM Osmond further announced that there is a Town Council election this year. Election judges and Council candidates are encouraged to sign up. CM Dewey announced a number of upcoming events and meetings.

TM Broadbent said she had the light fixtures cleaned and will have the trim in the Council chamber repainted before a new carpet will be laid. The Senior Center and lounge will also be painted and carpeted. Further, she is planning to install a trophy case for awards and plaques where the maps used to hang. Councilmembers said they would like to have a white board and at least one map of the Town.

6. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the Council calendar. The January 27 worksession will feature project updates, and the February 2 worksession a presentation on investment policy. The next Four Cities meeting will be held on January 30 at Davis Hall, a temporary location of College Park's city hall. Electronics recycling is on January 25 at the Greenbelt Public Works yard. Old Christmas lights can be dropped off at the Town office. Alkaline batteries no longer need to be recycled as they are not as toxic as they used to be. All types of recyclables can be disposed off at MOM's in the Rhode Island Avenue shopping center.

7. Citizens Discussion

There was none

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk